

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

101323Z Nov 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001992

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/10/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [IR](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: ARMENIANS WILL NOT JEOPARDIZE ECONOMIC TIES FOR
POLITICAL CRITICISM OF IRAN

REF: A) YEREVAN 1986 B) YEREVAN 1725 C) YEREVAN 1969

D) YEREVAN 1055 E) YEREVAN 391

Classified By: Ambassador John M. Evans for reasons 1.4(b,d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a November 8 conversation with the Ambassador, Presidential chief of staff and co-chair of the Armenia-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC) Artashes Tumanian said he would have no choice but to meet with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad in Tehran on November 11 (reftels), but that he would not be able to directly discuss the new president's inflammatory anti-Israeli rhetoric. Instead, Tumanian said, he planned to raise the issue with "other Iranian officials" over the course of his five-day visit. Armenians were "as horrified as anyone else" by Ahmadi-Nejad's rhetoric, according to Tumanian, though that same day, Armenian Energy Minister Movsesyan told reporters that that Ahmadi-Nejad's remarks "will not affect" Armenian-Iranian relations. A growing chorus of GOAM officials is publicly contradicting Tumanian's assurances, however, hailing relations with Iran as "extremely important" for Armenian economic development -- particularly in energy and trade -- and openly dismissing the danger of Iranian extremism. End Summary.

GOAM IN PRIVATE: EXTREMISM IS/ISN'T ON THE TEHRAN AGENDA

2. (C) In a November 8 conversation with the Ambassador, Presidential chief of staff and co-chair of the Armenia-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC) Artashes Tumanian said he would meet with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad in Tehran the week of November 11 (reftels), but that he would not directly discuss the new president's inflammatory anti-Israeli remarks. Instead, Tumanian said he planned to "caution other Iranian officials" over the course of his five days of consultations. A seven-year veteran of the Armenia-Iran JEC, Tumanian told the Ambassador that Armenians were "as horrified as anyone else" by Ahmadi-Nejad's comments, but that a direct conversation, particularly during their first meeting, would be inappropriate. (Note: Tumanian committed to meet with the Ambassador to discuss his JEC consultations upon his return from Tehran. End Note.)

GOAM IN PUBLIC: ARMENIA-IRAN RELATIONS ON TRACK

3. (C) Contrary to Tumanian's private comments, Armenian Minister of Energy Armen Movsesyan, who is joining Tumanian's November 11-17 JEC delegation to Tehran, told reporters at the Noyan Tapan News Agency that Armenia has "no political problems" with Iran and added that Ahmadi-Nejad's remarks "will not affect" relations "especially in the energy sector." In various public statements, Movsesyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vartan Oskanian (ref. B), Prime Minister Andranik Markaryan (September 15), President Robert Kocharian (June 27), Defense Minister Serzh Sargsyan (February 8) have all publicly acknowledged the importance of deepening economic and political relations with Iran.

4. (C) Following a September 15 meeting with Ahmadi-Nejad at the U.N. General Assembly in New York, Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Markaryan told reporters at Armenia's Mediamax and Azg news agencies that "there are no political problems between Armenia and Iran." The news agencies reported that Markaryan said Iran's "balanced regional policy" played an "extremely important" role in Armenian-Iranian joint economic development and in strengthening stability in the South Caucasus. On June 27, President Kocharian issued a public statement congratulating Ahmadi-Nejad, then President-elect of the "friendly state of Iran." Kocharian's statement read, "I hope that during Your Excellency's tenure in office, relations between our two countries will continue to develop and will achieve new

success for the benefit of our two peoples." On February 8, Serzh Sargsyan traveled with a delegation of Armenian defense officials to Tehran at the invitation of Iran National Security Secretary General Hassan Rouhani. At the time, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Iran Desk Officer Hasmik Dashtoyan told us Sargsyan "wanted to visit Iran before the elections, in order to reinforce the Armenia-Iran strategic partnership."

ENERGY/TRADE AT ROOT OF PUBLIC/PRIVATE CONTRADICTIONS

15. (C) Armenian energy insecurity, exacerbated by recent fuel shortages (ref. A), wholesale dependence on Russian control of Armenia's national power grid (ref B), and Russian gas supplies (ref E), is driving this push to diversify Armenia's energy sources and suppliers. As Movsesyan has told us, Armenia's number one energy priority was to complete the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline, which will reduce dependence on Russia and on the single poorly-maintained Gazprom pipeline through Georgia.

COMMENT: IRANIAN-ARMENIAN TIES DEEPENING?

16. (C) Armenia's failure to condemn Ahmadi-Nejad's October 25 call to "wipe Israel off the map" -- even when traditional ally Russia had already taken that step -- illustrates the government's commitment to developing relations with Iran, no matter what the cost. We have again registered with our GOAM interlocutors the importance of delivering a strong message of caution against extremism -- if not publicly then at least privately -- to the Iranians. We should not set great store by either their willingness to go to bat on this issue or their potential effectiveness even were they to do so.
EVANS